

Clinton, Schumer, Lautenberg, Menendez, Nadler, Maloney, Fossella Announce Congressional Approval of \$52.5 Million to Expand Health Coverage for 9/11 Emergency Responders

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Funds to Expand Treatment to Residents, Office and Commercial Workers, Students, and Other Individuals

Call for Focus on Long-Term, Comprehensive Solution to Screen and Monitor All Individuals Who Were Exposed to the Environmental Hazards After the September 11th Attacks

Washington, DC – Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton, Charles Schumer, Frank Lautenberg, and Robert Menendez, along with Representatives Jerrold Nadler, Carolyn Maloney, and Vito Fossella today announced that the Joint House and Senate Conference Committee has approved an additional \$52.5 million in federal funding to address the mounting health needs of those individuals who were exposed to the environmental hazards released as a result of the September 11, 2001 attacks upon the World Trade Center.

The funding, which comes in addition to the \$50 million that was provided in the recent Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill, was included in the Fiscal Year 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS) Appropriations Bill by the Senate Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. The bill, having been approved by the Conference Committee, must now be approved by both chambers of Congress. If it is passed by the House and Senate it will then be sent to the President for his signature.

“This is great news for those who still suffer from the lingering effects of the 9/11 attacks,” Senator Clinton said. “Today’s conference committee approval of this additional funding is vital to the first responders, building and construction trades workers, volunteers, office workers, residents, students, and others who are experiencing health problems from the exposure to toxic substances released by the attacks. It is our national responsibility to care for those who did our country proud in the hours, days, weeks, or months following the horrific attacks. This announcement gives us renewed hope that the funding needed to carry on these vital health tracking and treatment services will be delivered, and I strongly urge the President to sign this critical legislation into law.”

“Congress has now given final approval to this vital funding and now the Administration must do the same. The brave men and women whose will and strength carried us through the days after 9/11 and now suffer from debilitating illnesses because of their work at Ground Zero deserve no less. For far too long, the administration has refused to fully fund the many clinics and programs that serve the heroes still suffering from the affects of 9/11, and those yet to develop symptoms. That is simply not right. We will continue to fight for full funding for our first responders and others to ensure they receive the attention and care they deserve,” Schumer said.

“First responders, emergency workers and volunteers showed true courage during the recovery effort after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Now, many of these brave men and women are suffering serious illnesses from the toxins at Ground Zero,” said Lautenberg. “I urge the President to rethink his irresponsible veto threat so these heroes can get the treatment they deserve.”

“Six years after 9/11, the toll of those terrorist attacks continues to rise,” said Sen. Menendez. “Without this kind of strong federal commitment to monitor and treat all who inhaled the toxic dust, there are many more who will suffer. This is a tremendously important investment in the human recovery from 9/11”

“I applaud the committee for its landmark decision to include funding for the monitoring and treatment of area

residents, workers and students who are suffering as a result of 9/11," said Rep. Nadler. "After years of pushing and prodding, I am pleased that the new Democratic majority in Congress was able to both fulfill its promise of funding and to broaden funding to include all affected populations. I urge the President to fulfill America's moral obligation to the victims of 9/11 and support this measure. And, I am hopeful that we can someday soon devise a long-term, comprehensive solution that is not subject to these annual budget battles."

"This bill gives 9/11 health clinics the funding they need to keep their doors open," said Maloney. "The New York delegation has worked hard to extend proper care to everyone who is suffering as a result of exposure to toxins at Ground Zero. I urge President Bush to sign this bill into law."

Fossella said, "It is essential that funding is available to monitor those who were exposed to the air over Ground Zero and treat all who are sick and injured. A comprehensive and funded federal plan needs to be established so that the health and monitoring programs have a degree of certainty and that their future is not left to the whims of the appropriations process."

Specifically, the \$52.5 million will go towards screening, monitoring and treatment activities administered by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to help those individuals who were exposed to the environmental hazards released on and after 9/11. The bill also includes language requiring the Department of Health and Human Services, through NIOSH, to expand the program beyond responders and rescue workers to entities that would provide services to residents, office and commercial workers, students, and other individuals who were exposed. Existing programs to serve those who were impacted include the centers in the Mt Sinai Consortium and the program run by the New York City Fire Department.

The lawmakers said that the approved funding is a recognition of the importance of addressing the short and long-term health needs of those individuals who were exposed to the environmental hazards released as a result of the September 11, 2001 attacks upon the World Trade Center, and affirms the commitment of the federal government to provide assistance to those whose physical and mental health was adversely impacted as a result of this exposure. More than six years after the attacks, persistent health effects have been documented among rescue and recovery workers, such as asthma, chronic sinusitis, and gastrointestinal conditions. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and other health effects have also been diagnosed among those who have been exposed.

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